

Nowthen City Council  
July 6, 2023  
Work Session Minutes

1. **CALL TO ORDER**

Mayor Pilon called the meeting to order at 5:32 pm.  
All present recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

Present: Mayor Pilon, Council Members Rainville, and Breyen

Excused Absence: Council Member Fladebo

Absent: Council Member Alders

Also Present: Administrator Lehner, Deputy Clerk Johnson, Fire Chief Schmidt, and Finance Consultant Lori Yager

**MOTION BY COUNCIL MEMBER BREYEN, SECONDED BY RAINVILLE TO APPROVE THE WORKSESSION AGENDA. MOTION CARRIED. 3 AYES.**

2. **DISCUSSION REGARDING THE 2024 + CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN**

The mayor stated that Nowthen will receive \$198,185 for the Safety Grant. This grant must be used only on public safety items. The city should receive these funds prior to the end of 2023.

The mayor stated that Nowthen will receive a new "Small Cities" payment for roads. The amount expected is \$99,409. This will come in 2 payments in 2024. The first with the June/July tax payment and the second with the December tax payment. This is an annual payment to small cities and should go up each year based upon fees collected by the State of Minnesota.

The mayor confirmed that the city has received the first ½ taxes for 2023 and most of it has been invested for the city.

There have been 3 meetings between staff, the mayor, and department heads, included the city engineer and Lori Yager to discuss the Capital Improvement Plan for the city of Nowthen for the next 1,5, 10-year plans. Council Member Alders had wanted to be in on these meetings but was not able to attend.

The reason the city does the Capital Improvement Plans is to inform future councils and the public of the city's plans for the future. What projects are expected to be completed, what roads need repairs, new equipment, or major repairs to equipment, etc. The city staff is looking to expand this plan in the future, but this is a good start as it hasn't been completed well or followed in the past.

**2023 ROADS**

The city's road plan for 2024 starts with Jasper Street. This road has not been repaired or re-surfaced because the city was hoping to have the state help with funding this project once the city hit 5,000 people and it qualifies for additional monies for roads. Unfortunately, with the 2020

census, the city did not reach the 5,000 population to receive these extra funds. Because the road is in need of repair, staff asked the engineer to come up with an estimate to resurface and correct this road. The estimated cost is 1.6 million dollars. With the city paying 50% of the cost would be approximately a \$41,000 assessment to each resident on that road. That number is not an acceptable number for residents and the city cannot afford to pay that much. Therefore, an alternative is to have city staff make repairs to the worst areas of the road. The Public Works Department is hoping to start that very soon.

Xenon Street needs culvert replacement and road repairs.

Old Viking, 185<sup>th</sup>, 187<sup>th</sup>, and Clifton Rd need striping. Staff will confirm striping is included in every bid for our roads going forward.

City parking lots need resurfacing and striping.

These four (4) roads projects are set to be completed in 2023. The details will be provided to the city council for the July 11<sup>th</sup> city council meeting.

#### **SIGN REPLACEMENT**

Many signs need to be replaced due to wear, tear and stolen. These should be included in the city's Capital Improvement Plan.

#### **ROAD STUDY**

A road study is needed to make an informed decision on the which roads need to be completed and develop a schedule for repairs and maintenance. The city is incredibly lucky to have Public Works Supervisor Joe Glaze working for the city. He has a wealth of knowledge on the roads and culverts in the city. There needs to be a way to capture his knowledge for the future. Council

Member Breyen stated he had a recollection that the city is supposed to keep a culvert inventory on hand. He will check into it.

The mayor asked if the council could look at the Equipment Fund to accommodate Chief Schmidt and his schedule.

#### **EQUIPMENT FUND**

1. **NEW FIRE DEPARTMENT TANKER UPDATE** - The Fire Department does not expect delivery until July of 2024. This is a year past what they were told. \$409,500 has been paid down on it with a remaining balance of \$40,950 to be paid upon delivery. The good news is that the city will receive 3% back on the money paid until the tanker has been received.
2. **RESCUE TRUCK** – During previous meetings, it was discussed that this rescue has engine/electrical issues. The Fire Department originally requested a new rescue, but after discussions, it seems a new motor would be sufficient for the time being, to extend the life of the rescue vehicle. Council Member Breyen suggested if the city is to receive the safety funds

in 2023, then let's get the motor replaced in 2023 if possible rather than 2024. Staff is directed to bring a RCA and Resolution to the August city council meeting.

3. **RADIOS FOR THE FIRE DEPARTMENT** – Due to the unrest since 2020, public safety has been informed that encryption radios are coming. This would be an unfunded mandate from the state of Minnesota. It is unclear when this mandate is coming, however, the city should be prepared to make a change to these radios when the mandate comes. Radios are currently in the CIP for 2029 as a placeholder. If it happens sooner than that the city needs to be prepared. Currently radios are 22 weeks out from order to delivery.
4. **TURN OUT GEAR** - \$7,500 a year is currently in the CIP plan to build up a fund. They have a 10-year life expectancy. The fire department is still trying to hire additional fire fighters. In addition, if any of the gear is damaged or dated out, it needs to be replaced quickly to protect our fire fighters.
5. **STERLING 9500** – This truck should be delivered in 2024. This was funded by the equipment bond.

There was discussion about the status of the fire department equipment. Council Member Rainville wanted to be sure there are no other big purchases needed for the fire department. Chief Schmidt stated the city did a good job on the front end setting up the fire department.

## **PARKS**

Discussion regarding a parks and trail plan. Does the city want a trail plan? Are our current parks being utilized by our residents or other city residents? It seems to some that are parks are dog parks for Ramsey residents and the Beach is used more by other city residents than Nowthen residents. Additional discussion that Nowthen's residents recreate on their own properties. This area is not urban and most have larger lots. Council Member Rainville felt that the money would be better spent on upgrading and improving the existing parks rather than investing in additional trail system that would very likely not get used and would create additional work for staff who have difficulty keeping up with the current trails. The last time the council took a tour of the parks was in 2020. Discussion for the need of another tour and listing of repairs, maintenance, or improvement council would like to see in our two existing parks including the memorial by the historic town hall. The lions should be responsible for removing the Christmas lights off the trees as well.

Memorial Park needs some additional improvements in the shelter and the rental form should be updated to reflect the correct type of electrical service in the building.

Discussion what is capital and what is maintenance/repairs. Lori explained that usually anything over \$5,000 and at least a 5+ year life expectancy can be considered capital.

The mayor suggested we go back to fire department needs as far as capital improvements in the future before Chief Schmidt left the meeting. The chief expressed the need to be forward thinking rather than reactive to things as they come up. One of the biggest issues will be the building. First off, the current building will not meet the tier 1 status – he doubts the building ability to withstand a tornado or strong storm. The department is already busting at the seams with

equipment and staff, it will not be long as the department grows, hires additional fire fighters to serve the city and additional equipment before it has outgrown this building. He and the mayor suggested the city think about a new fire station. Where would it be? How would the city pay for it? Keep watching for land – the area should be close to where the people are as we do not want to have slower response times because it takes longer to get to the station. Secondly, a well for water to fill a tanker truck quickly is needed. The well the city currently has is sufficient for topping off the tanks but cannot fill quickly. Currently the trucks go to other cities to fill in a hurry. Administrator Lehner stated there is a possible well to use with the Mortz family, more discussion is needed. Another option is smaller wells throughout the city. With that, the chief was dismissed.

### **CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS TO BUILDINGS**

1. **Historic Town Hall** – Discussion about making improvements to the building. Council Member Rainville stated that at some point the county will be expanding County Rd 5 in front of the building and the city should not put too much money into it. Improvements to help for the time being but not for further into the future.
2. **City Offices** – Discussion about adding to the city offices to include dedicated council chambers, meeting spaces, area for seniors, elections, etc. This plan is down the road but will need to be planned for. The land is paid for and there is space for an additional of this nature.
3. **Cold Storage for Public Works** – In the CIP plan there is money for a new cold storage building for public works equipment rather than storing outside or in the garage near the historic town hall (which would also be removed when County Road 5 is expanded).

### **BACK TO ROADS**

2023 – City Parking Lots. Staff is getting quotes and will bring to council for approval before the end of the summer.

2023 – Road repairs, maintenance was discussed earlier in the meeting. These projects will be brought to council for approval at the July 11, 2023 meeting.

2024 – Waco Street was on the CIP with Erkium. Consider removing Erkium as it is not on the Ramsey Plan for 2024. Waco was not done before because the City Council wanted to piggyback on Ramsey doing their side. Ramsey is not assessing, Nowthen would have to have a \$21,000 per resident. Could the city pay for culverts and collapsed areas, with residents paying for asphalt only? Curbing in concrete, not asphalt as many companies no longer do them. The road is a 9-ton road – with a steel business on it. Is it possible to have the company pay an additional amount because without the business there, it could be a lesser ton road. The council is attempting to keep as much of the pricing away from the residents as possible. Discussion to have the City Engineer do a feasibility study to see what best fix for the best pricing for the residents and the city would be.

Discussion regarding MS4 and funding to be available if any contamination is found in holding ponds.

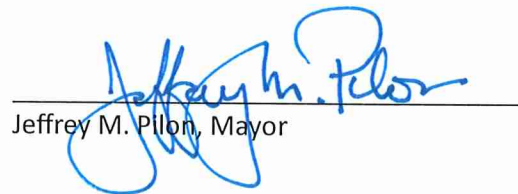
Bonding will be needed in 2025 & 2027 (10 – 20-year bonds) – If the city goes with a 20 year bond vs a 10 year bond, it will be more expensive in the long run, but would be easier to keep levy's from increasing into double digits for these years.

**MOTION BY COUNCIL MEMBER RAINVILLE, SECONDED BY BREYEN TO ADJOURN. MOTION CARRIES. 3 AYES.**

The meeting adjourned at 8:00 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

  
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Scott Lehner, City Administrator

  
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Jeffrey M. Pilon, Mayor